

Date: February 20, 2009

General Assembly Commends Local Preservation Group

The Virginia General Assembly on January 30, 2009 approved a resolution commending Friends of Wilderness Battlefield (FoWB) for their national recognition as outstanding preservationists. The joint resolution (SJ 369) was introduced by Senator Edd Houck (D-District 17) and co-sponsored by Delegate Edward T. Scott (R-District 30).

The Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT), a national organization of 65,000 members, last spring named FoWB the 2008 Brian C. Pohanka Preservation Organization of the Year. The award is presented annually to a local or regional group that has distinguished itself for outstanding dedication to the preservation, promotion and interpretation of Civil War history.

Upon passage of the joint resolution, Senator Houck said, "It was with great pleasure that I introduced a resolution commending the Friends of Wilderness Battlefield for receiving the award. I commend the organization for their hard work and dedication in protecting and preserving this state treasure and home of one of the most significant events during the Civil War. Our community owes them our sincere thanks and appreciation."

Del. Scott concurred, "It is my privilege to co-patron Senate Joint Resolution 369. This award reflects the growing efforts of the organization to preserve and restore Ellwood and to educate Virginians and visitors from around the world on the historic significance of the Wilderness Battlefield. As a native Virginian and as Delegate for the 30th District, I have great respect for the work of the Friends of the Wilderness Battlefield."

Friends of Wilderness Battlefield was founded in 1995 with 10 members and today with the bulk of its growing membership residing in Orange, Spotsylvania and neighboring counties is also represented in an additional 28 states. As an all-volunteer organization, FoWB

works in partnership with the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park (FSNMP) to preserve and maintain the Wilderness Battlefield.

“We are very pleased that the Friends of Wilderness Battlefield has received this richly deserved recognition from the General Assembly,” stated FSNMP Superintendent Russ Smith. “Whether it's restoration, maintenance or interpretation, the Friends do it all at Wilderness Battlefield. We are grateful every day.”

One of the group's most significant undertakings has been the restoration of Ellwood, a 1790s historic house and the only structure from the Battle of the Wilderness that exists today. To date, FoWB has raised more than \$330,000 to restore and maintain Ellwood.

“The commendation from the State of Virginia is a great honor for Friends of Wilderness Battlefield,” said Carolyn Elstner, chair of the Ellwood Restoration Project. “We are especially indebted to Senator Houck and Delegate Scott for recognizing our dedication to preserving the Wilderness Battlefield, hand-in-hand with the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. As Ellwood Committee Chair since 1997, I've been privileged to watch our dreams for Ellwood steadily unfold, thanks to FoWB's team of volunteers who have educated the public, sought large sums for the house's restoration and impeccably maintained the site. Ellwood is truly a national treasure that Virginia can claim with pride.”

Additional FoWB service projects focus on maintaining other Wilderness Battlefield Park properties including cleaning the roads and clearing the trails, as well as painting and repairing signs and structures. It coordinates the annual CWPT Park Day on the battlefield under the leadership of Craig Rains, FoWB Battlefield Resources Chair.

“FoWB is an example of what can be done by volunteers who unselfishly give their time and talent to preserve the history of Virginia and the nation for our children and grandchildren. I am grateful to the Senate and House for recognizing our group in its dedication as caretakers of the Wilderness battlefield for all of America.” Rains said.

The General Assembly resolution directs “the Clerk of the Senate (to) prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Friends of Wilderness Battlefield as an expression of the General Assembly’s gratitude to its members and volunteers for their commitment to preserve the Wilderness Battlefield and the history of Virginia.”

Friends of Wilderness Battlefield is a non-profit, all volunteer organization devoted to assisting the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park in efforts to preserve the Wilderness Battlefield in Orange and Spotsylvania Counties. With more than 230 members, the Friends provide advocacy, educational programs and service projects for the battlefield

Ellwood, also known as the Lacy House, was built in the 1790s. During the battle of Chancellorsville in 1863, it served as a Confederate hospital. General “Stonewall” Jackson's amputated arm is buried in its family cemetery. Two Federal corps commanders used Ellwood as headquarters during the battle of the Wilderness in 1864. Be sure to view the FoWB’s Web site at www.fowb.org for more information about Ellwood and the Battle of the Wilderness.

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